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LETTER

FROM

REV. J. C. EDGHILL, DD,

CHAPLAIN-GENERAL,

TO THE

SYNOD OF NOVA SCOTIA.

HALIFAX, N. S.
OLLOWAY BROS., 69 GRANVILLE STREET.
1887.

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SCHLUCHSEE, BADEN, S. GERMANY,

13th July, 1887.

To the Synod of Nova Scotia:—

MY DEAR BRETHREN IN CHRIST,—I need scarcely say that your action in electing me Bishop of your Diocese took me thoroughly by surprise. I had heard that my name had been mentioned, but I regarded this as a mere kindly expression on the part of a few old friends, and so gave no thought to the matter; indeed, when I left England I understood that you had already chosen your Chief Pastor.

I was thus utterly unprepared for such a telegram. Its simple message, so fragrant with meaning, moved me more than any event in my life has ever done. That men of such character and standing as many of the clergy of the Diocese, men at whose feet in the Kingdom of God I would gladly sit, should deem me fitting to be their Bishop humiliated me deeply, and that so many laymen, whose knowledge of me could now only be through the faintest memories of work attempted for God's glory and men's good over fifteen years ago, seemed to me most marvellous. I could not but feel "this is God's doing," "this is God's call."

So the fact that you had elected me as your Bishop demanded from me anxious and careful consideration. I dared not send a telegram refusing to come; that would have been most discourteous to you, and I might be found fighting against God. I was well aware of the great inconveniences which would ensue from postponing the Synod, but I could only have said "No" without further thought and consultation, and I was desirous of seeing my way to say "Yes" plainly before me. Your generosity in adding the $2000 to the income made it possible for me to accept, so that I felt the whole question was

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narrowed down to this one point, "Is it God's will that I should leave my present work and undertake the still more solemn and untried responsibilities to which you call me?"

Everything seemed to call me to you. Your unanimous choice; the knowledge of your Diocese which I had gained by actual experience; the love I have ever had for Nova Scotia and its people; the pressing telegram from so many valued and trusting friends; all seemed to me to show what the will of the Lord was. But the question still had to be answered: "*Had I any right at present to leave my work in the army?*"

No one who knows anything of the circumstances of my selection as Chaplain-General can doubt for one moment that God called me to it; that He had a special work for me to do in this post. The Archbishop says: "No post within my knowledge and recollection cost authorities, civil and ecclesiastical so much trouble as yours did in the filling of it. That God has you there with your special gifts and special experience no man can doubt." For two years and a half I have met with nothing but helpful kindness and consideration from all those in authority in carrying out what I believe to be necessary for the well-being of the Church in the army.

But as yet the work is but beginning. There are many unrealized plans, many hopes of usefulness, many attacks on the kingdom of darkness, which two years' experience has opened out before me. Others might indeed carry on this work more efficiently than I can, yet for it a man needs knowledge as well as love, and that knowledge is not to be won by any rapid intuition but by patient study of our soldiers, of their wants and capabilities. Experience alone shows one how to apply the old truth, the everlasting Gospel, to their special circumstances.

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The work is peculiar, unique. "There are many Bishops," says the Archbishop, "but *one* Chaplain-General. The Secretary of State writes to me: "I feel strongly that your loss to us *just now* would be almost irreparable." Thus strengthened by the judgment of those whose position enables them to judge so well, I can but believe that God has called me distinctly to my present work, and that *I have not completed it*, and if I gave it up thus prematurely I should be thwarting God's purpose.

Yet, in full view of your action, and all that it implied, I felt shaken, at least my heart went out towards you, while my judgment bade me stay. I tried to put away all selfish thoughts and desires. I could but "commit my ways unto the Lord," knowing that He who orders "the course of this world" for the good of His Church would, according to His promise "direct my path."

I placed myself, as you would, I know, have bidden me do, in the hands of the Archbishop. He says: "That this call means so distinctly that you are, without the concurrence of other signs, to move from the War Office to Nova Scotia, I could never believe." "I cannot conceive that you ar called to Nova Scotia, or to do anything but to walk with God in a great office more actively and closely still." In accordance with this clear decision I telegraphed at once to your Archdeacon.

Had your call, so unexpected and unsolicited, come to me after a few more years of work for God where He has placed me, I feel that I must have acted differently, and recognized the call as from Him, and simply have bowed my head, crying, "Here am I, send me."

I cannot in words tell you the real pain this decision has cost me. Your kindness and confidence will never be forgotten; it will ever be to me one of

those few incidents in life which profoundly affect time and eternity. You have given me a stimulus which will be inspiring, a new impulse to work more zealously for God, and to live more closely to Him.

The call has humbled me. I could only say, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." Such calls never can do anything else to any genuine man. Once before I felt this most intensely, and then one to whom I spoke said to me, "Ah, my brother finish the verse, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word." That quickening grace of His Holy Spirit God will give, and in it is my trust.

Specially am I desirous to thank you for the unanimity you have exhibited, and with a very grateful heart I must acknowledge the telegram from St. Paul's Parish, Halifax, assuring me of welcome. This added much to my desire to come to you.

My dear friends, I have learnt much since I saw you face to face. One truth has been impressed in my soul with ever increasing power, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all." Believing in the manifold helpfulness which we men are able to exert for our fellows, in the manifold gifts of the one Spirit, in the manifold channels through which Jesus gains our love and rules our will, I should have worked in Nova Scotia cheerfully, heartily, trustingly, with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

Nova Scotia has special claims upon me, for in it for six years I met with nothing but encouraging kindness. Never was my work more full of happiness to myself, or more generously judged by others. In spite of much immaturity and lack of completeness, you received me as a fellow labourer with God. I have never ceased to thank my God for

those years, they did much to make me what I am, and to fit me for my work. Friends still living amongst you, and, above all, three now in the Paradise of God—Bishop Binney, the Venerable Dean, and that grandest, truest of men, G. W. Hodgson, helped much my spiritual culture and gave me "new thoughts of God," new hopes of Heaven." While your late Bishop was also an ever ready friend and adviser whose impartiality, right judgment and clearness of insight I have never ceased to admire.

With these recollections you will easily understand how deeply I have felt this refusal to come to you as your bishop; yet it is right that it should be so, and according to the will of God. No personal feeling, no self-will has dictated it. God will bless it to you and I pray to me.

There are two words with which I would counsel you, if you will allow me this privilege:

(1.) Recognize the fact that the Church in Nova Scotia must be a missionary Church. Do not be content with the well being of your own congregation. Win Nova Scotia for God, let that be your aim. There is in every man grand spiritual possibilities; claim every man for Christ his true Master. Believe that the Church of England is the best spiritual home for English-speaking men and women and do your best by your life and truth to commend it to your fellow countrymen. We all love the Church, her worship, her prayers, her sacraments are dear to us, they have touched our lives. I know what the Church can do in Nova Scotia, for I have seen its power. Never have I met with so willing a people, so ready to hear, so glad to respond to the truth when once brought home to them. The Church should put forth the converting power of God, the Holy Ghost, for the gathering together the

children of God who are scattered abroad, as well as use the powers for edification committed to her. If you desire to enter into God's purposes for His Church, you should remember that that purpose is Nova Scotia for Jesus, and let your sympathies be widened and your efforts increased, so that to the restless hearts of hundreds around you the firm unchanging truths of which the Church is a witness might be brought, and the present living Saviour revealed; while to the mass of human hearts steeped in sin, and overpowered by passion, the precious blood which cleanses from all sin might be made known in its cleansing and purifying power.

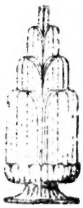
(2.) Recognize the diversity of gifts, needs and instruments in the Church through which the manifold wisdom of God is shewn. Bear with one another as you all were prepared to bear with me. You are one Church, one in hope and doctrine be one in charity, one in earnest work, one in your love of your fellow men and in your desire to help them. We are all being drawn nearer to each other, the common destiny of sorrow and death do that, we are learning that God's truths are many sided, and God's methods numberless; that we do not hold *conflicting* doctrines but *completing* ones. Nothing can show more plainly how you have increased in this blessed knowledge than your conduct toward me. Do not "grieve the Spirit." Let him be the bond of union He yearns to be. As a united Church each congregation cheerfully submitting to the authority of the whole Church, while retaining its own individuality you will be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

May God give you then choicest gifts, enthusiasm and love. May he reveal to you more and more the source from which they come, the loving Holy

Ghost. May you be baptised with the Holy Ghost who is comfort, life and fire of love.

I knew God will give you a Bishop who will "rule you prudently with all his power." My prayer shall never cease to ascend for this result, that he who is chosen to this office in my stead may be a good shepherd. May "hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcasts, and seek the lost."

To one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I commend you; may the peace of God rest on you and yours.

Believe me obediently,
Ever yours most faithfully and gratefully
in our Blessed Lord,

J. C. EDGHILL,
C. G.